

# News Release

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## **FOREST SERVICE TO CARRY OUT THIRTYMILE FIRE ACTION PLAN**

**WASHINGTON, Oct. 22, 2001**--U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth today accepted the Accident Prevention Action Plan on the Thirtymile Fire and again expressed his condolences to the families and declared that the action items will begin immediately.

"We must prevent tragedies like this one from occurring in the future," said Bosworth. "The Forest Service will work closely with the National Wildfire Coordinating Group and our interagency wildland firefighting partners to ensure that proposed changes in management and policies are made to improve firefighter safety and reduce risks."

The Thirtymile Fire killed four firefighters on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest on July 10, 2001. The four are Tom Craven, Karen FitzPatrick, Jessica Johnson and Devin Weaver.

The Accident Prevention Action Plan was based on the Thirtymile Fire Accident Investigation Team's report and the Management Evaluation Report developed by the Thirtymile Fire Board of Review. The review board, chaired by Tom Thompson, deputy chief, National Forest System, detailed action items for each recommendation.

Some of the key actions items include: emphasizing situational awareness; transitioning from initial to extended attack; addressing chronic fatigue issues; and strengthening fire leadership and accountability.

Other changes or recommendations may result when a separate Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration investigation is completed.

"The deaths of these firefighters were preventable," Chief Bosworth said, "Although firefighting is a dangerous vocation, there are standing orders and preventive measures which can be taken to reduce the likelihood of this tragedy happening again. The Forest Service is committed to doing everything possible to improve the safety of these unsung heroes."

For copies of the Prevention Action Plan, visit the Forest Service website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire>.

On a separate but related effort at the request of Chief Bosworth, the Accident Review Board

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has evaluated the witness statements and the Sept. 26, 2001 report to try to understand more clearly what happened during the final moments leading up to the deployment of fire shelters during the Thirtymile Fire.

"Additional review of the facts and witness statements surrounding the 30-mile fatalities has uncovered no definitive evidence that any firefighters deliberately disobeyed a direct order from the incident commander," said Thompson, chair, Board of Review. "It is possible the firefighters either didn't hear the order to come to the road, or if some did hear the directive they believed they were close to the road."

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